1: Handy E-5 (1920-1921)1923 OX6 Marquesas OX6

general girls were preferred to boys for adoption, because they would stay in the family and tribe in which they had been reared, while boys were likely to go back to the tribe to which they were bound by birth. Children were bespoken long before birth, and such a request was never refused, refusal constituting an insult.

Purpose of Adoption

The purpose of adoption was to accomplish the union of two families, since the families of the child and its foster parents were regarded as united as one after the formalities of adoption. The object of bringing about such a union of families was the acquisition of wealth, social prestige, and power. Adoption, like marriage, was frequently a chief's means of alliance with the chief of another tribe, and hence the means by which two tribes became allied in war. Both adoption and marriage between chiefs' families usually had as their purpose political advantage, and marked the establishment of lasting alliances between tribes. The tribe was regarded as the family of the chief. By formal betrothal or adoption two families were made as one. Hence the union of two chiefly families in this way meant that their people were united as one tribe. That such alliances were not actually permanent but were disrupted upon the merest whim of the people is shown by an occurrence during the last war between Hana Mate and Atu Ona, when an alliance thus made was intentionally ruptured by a killing.

In the adoption that took place in less influential families, two other elements were more important: gaining additional members of the family for the sake of work and service and increasing the number of offspring. It was all-important for the native that he should have sufficient descendants after his death to make the necessary offerings to enable his spirit to reach Havaiki safely and to elevate it in rank in the land of spirits. If a man had no children or perhaps only one, he felt safer when he insured the future of his soul by adopting one or more additional children, who would have the same obligation to his spirit and his remains after his death as though they were his born children.

From adoption resulted mutual benefit for both families, since both gained in power and wealth by the union, for the child that was taken away could be replaced by adopting another child from another family. One of a prisoner-of-war's few chances of saving his life was through being adopted by the chief of the victorious tribe. A prisoner thus adopted became a member of the family (probably as a servitor).